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SMC Board Reflects on Progress Since COVID

COMMUNITY REPORT

DOWAGIAC — For the fifth anniversary of COVID-19, President Dr. Joe Odenwald reflected for the Southwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees March 12 on the pandemic's legacy.

"Are we better than we were five years ago as a college?" Odenwald posed a question he answered, "Yes, we are."

"I was 10 weeks on the job when we began the shutdown," he recalled. "Tracy Hertsel's first day as a trustee, when we took the governor's call, was March 11. We baptized him in lemon juice. By the following Monday, we were operating both campuses remotely. The year 2020 tested the college in ways it had not been tested in any of the 60+ years as an institution.

Odenwald

"Enrollment that fall fell 17 percent. The final number in spring was 1,887. This spring it is 1,892 — the first semester we've been higher than we were in a direct comparison with 2020. The college has recovered our enrollment losses, aided by being up six straight semesters since Fall 2022.

"This spring, 25 percent of all course contact hours are fully online," Odenwald said. "In March 2020, that number was zero. We're more resilient, more balanced and meeting the needs of people we weren't able to meet when we didn't have that modality. Working adults, returning to get a degree who can't come during the day, comprise a fourth of our hours.

"Intercollegiate athletics lived only in the History Gallery. Today we're celebrating a lofty return. We have earned a statewide award for the best overall athletics program, conference titles, district titles, national appearances, multiple Top 15 teams, four All-Americans — three wrestlers, one women's basketball player— and National Coach of the Year (Todd Hesson, wrestling). Most importantly, student athletes are graduating and serving the community."

"We used to be able to house 390 students. For Fall 2025, the number will be 426" through a 12-apartment expansion that incurred no debt. "Retention, persistence and graduation rates are higher for every category of students. Some of these numbers are the highest we've had since we began collecting data in the '90s.

"We now have a career development office that works with students from orientation to graduation, preparing them for post-college success, including the March 19 Career Fair, which is completely open to the public."

Odenwald also reported on the fourth cohort of Grady Scholars dinner March 11.

See PROGRESS, Page A8

Brandywine school board talks retirements, student representation

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — Brandywine Board of Education members discussed a number of topics at their meeting Monday night, including retirements, student representation on the school board and a new software app that will help teachers and coaches be in better contact with parents.

Board members accepted the retirements of five people and talked with Superintendent Travis Walker on their replacements. One retirement had been known, longtime educator and administrator Jim Boger is retiring in June from his position as the Brandywine Elementary School Principal.

Walker said that current Brandywine Elementary School Assistant Principal Melissa Foster will succeed Boger as the school principal. Foster was hired this year to mentor under Boger and take his place when he retired. The assistant principal position will not be filled.

Four teachers are also retiring: Ginger Jackson, elementary special education teacher; Sue Jordan, middle/high school science teacher; Carol Shubinski, elementary English language arts teacher; and Kelly Tranberg, elementary third grade teacher.

Walker said the district is being deliberate in replacing the four teachers given uncertainties with an unknown state budget and the potential Title funding cuts at the U.S. Department of Education.

He told board members that Jackson's and Jordan's positions will be posted while the district will wait and see what if any funding cuts are coming before posting the other two.

"It's unclear what's happening right now," he said. "There's no doubt that we have to fill these positions,

See SCHOOL, Page A8

Niles murder suspect found competent to stand trial

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — The case against a Missouri man charged with the 2023 death of a Niles man is back on after the man was found competent to stand trial late last week.

Jamie Phillip Perry, 30, of St. Louis, Missouri, is facing open murder and three other felony charges for the Sept. 30, 2023 death of Niles resident Luke James Botica at Botica's home on the north side of Niles.

Perry

Perry had been bound over for trial after a preliminary hearing that spanned four days in October, November and December of 2023. A forensic examination was ordered in the case in January, 2024 to determine if he was competent to stand trial on the charges.

Berrien County Assistant Prosecutor Myrene Koch reported Monday that Perry has been found competent to stand trial and the case is back on track to be heard later this spring and summer. Perry had been declared incompetent last August and then received treatment in

See SCHOOL, Page A8

BREAKING GROUND

Buchanan begins McCoy Creek's Trail Extension Project

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

BUCHANAN — Local officials held a groundbreaking Monday for a major new trail project in Buchanan.

Community members gathered to celebrate the beginning of the McCoy Creek's Trail Extension Project, which will connect Buchanan to the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail.

Local, state, and federal representatives and partners were on hand to celebrate the milestone for Buchanan and the region. The event featured the groundbreaking ceremony with brief remarks by dignitaries, a plaque presentation for key project members followed by refreshments and fellowship.

The McCoy's Creek Trail Extension project is being led by a coalition of community leaders including Jerry Flenar and Don Brooks of Friends of McCoy's Creek Trail, Suzannah Deneau of Wightman & Associates, Fran Tuite of Flatwater Farms, and Kris Martin and Brandon Kovnat of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission with support of the Buchanan City Commission and the Buchanan Township Board.

"The McCoy Creek Trail has been a project for the city for many years and Jerry, the City of Buchanan and everybody here have been working diligently to make this day a reality," said Buchhanan Mayor Mark Weedon. The trail extension supports small businesses and it's going to offer safe transportation for bicyclists and pedestrians alike. Our ultimate goal with this project is to connect up with the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail that is located in Niles."

The existing McCoy's Creek Trail is an approximately five-mile improved shared use path that runs along McCoy's Creek, through prairie, downtown Buchanan and E.B. Clark Woods. It includes historical markers and natural elements that tell the history of Buchanan and the region. The McCoy's Creek Trail Extension Project would extend the existing McCoy's Creek Trail a half-mile along Schirmer Parkway, down River Street across River Street Bridge and into Buchanan Township. This extension would not only provide recreational opportunities, but also alternative transportation options for residents and visitors to the region. Additional benefits include healthy lifestyle promotion, handicap accessibility, tourism/economic development, improved air quality, stronger community connections, and a great enhancement to the region's overall quality of life.

"Trails are really one of the highest and best uses for our tax dollars because it improves quality of life for the communities," said Berrien County Commissioner Mac Elliott. When we can do things like that, it makes this a better, more attractive place to live."

The extension project was funded via a $340,000 grant from the Niles-Buchanan Area Transportation Study and the Michigan Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program and a $300,000 grant from the Michigan DNR Natural Resources Trust Fund. Multiple funding sources on the federal, state, and local level were pursued for the project.

Because of the connections

See GROUND, Page A8

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
Community members gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking of the McCoy Creek's Trail Extension Project, which will connect Buchanan to the Indiana-Michigan River Valley Trail.

OBITUARIES

Shane Horsley
Jacqueline Porter
Kirby Gordon Sircher
Carol Hoekstra
Ronald Alfred Phillips
Patricia Wooldridge
Kenneth E. Purlee,
Mary Knoll
Carroll Parmeter
Cherie Dowling
Andrene Heathcote

A6

FRANKLY
TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

I really don't believe tariff is a beautiful word. A2

Team effort carries Brandywine girls to 45-32 win over KZoo Christian B1

6 54708 09550 1

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip, quip or blip? Call Frankly at (269) 687-7702 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com

Misery loves company - Russia, China, Iran & North Korea have just welcomed their newest member, America.

Thanks to our toxic media, we have been spoon fed poison by the far left telling us we are bad people and the far right telling us to be bad people. Unfortunately, the most toxic person comes from our Commander in Chief. Poison can be reversed if you no longer ingest it.

Trump was right, he will bring down inflation in the form of a recession. This weekend he said, "We can't rule it out."

As a homebuilder, how will a 25% tariff on lumber from Canada help our industry and improve the home shortage? Did someone just plant a bunch trees in the US.

I know this isn't popular, but trust the President to make the right decisions. He knows things you don't. Give the guy a chance. He's only been in office just over a month.

We need to dump daylight savings time. It's been linked to more car accidents and lower work production. Maybe it was important in 1895, but not today. It's complete nonsense to hang onto this ridiculous headache.

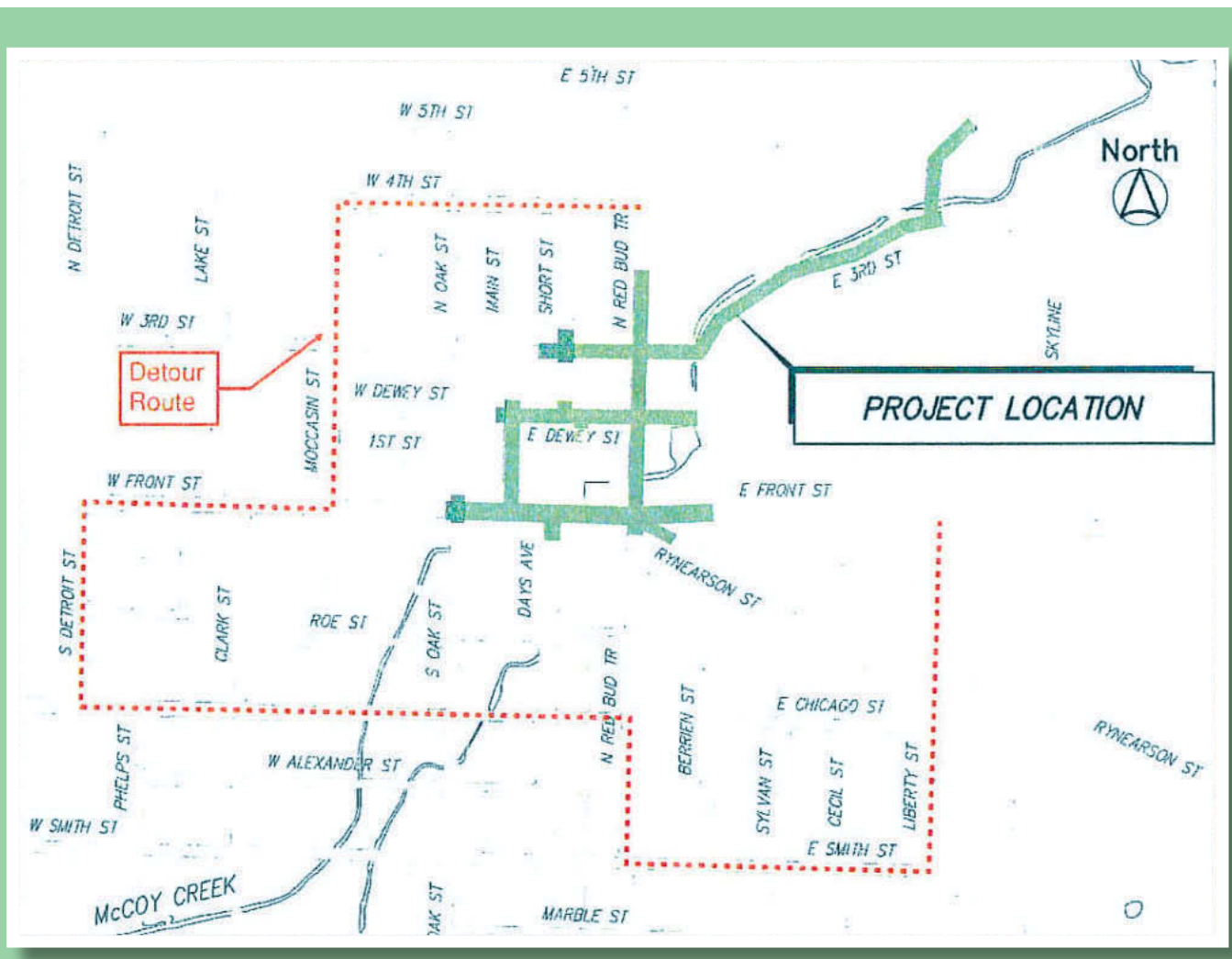
When did the laws of tailgating change? I guess it is now allowed by those who feel the speed limit is optional.

I really don't believe tariff is a beautiful word.

I have not been to a grocery store, yet that hasn't had a decent supply of eggs. Why the high prices? If Americans went one week without buying any, all of these high prices would be gone.

WEATHER

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
60% Chance Rain Showers	50% Chance Snow Showers	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	40% Chance Rain Showers	30% Chance Frozen Mix
73° 42°	41° 31°	54° 42°	67° 56°	57° 29°	44° 29°



BUCHANAN LEADERS ADDRESS INFRASTRUCTURE

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

BUCHANAN — City streets, rental housing regulations and a proposal that could bring in more water and sewer customers to the city were all topics addressed at Monday's Buchanan City Commission meeting.

Streets were the main topic at the meeting as streets start to get torn up with the start of the $19.4 million downtown infrastructure project. City officials are assuring residents that the inconveniences being experienced now will pay off later.

The project started with downtown trees removed last month. The project is expected to take at least the rest of this year. A new sanitary sewer line is being constructed from the wastewater treatment plant to the downtown, water and sewer lines will be upgraded and downtown streets and sidewalks will be redone.

City Commissioners and City Manager Tony McGhee spoke about the infrastructure project at their meeting Monday night, in terms of both what it will mean for the city and how the city plans to make up the $1.5 million funding shortfall. In addition, McGhee outlined his plans to spend $500,000 to address long term road issues throughout the city.

With the funding shortfall, commissioners authorized McGhee to work out a financing plan with Sturgis Bank officials. McGhee said the bank has offered interest rates of 4.75 percent or less over seven years with the city having the option of paying the loan off early. Commissioner Patrick Swem abstained from the vote as he works for Sturgis Bank.

McGhee will bring back a final proposal for commission action later this month. He said after the meeting that the plan is to use general fund and other revenue to pay the loan back, including the revenue from the four mills the city already levies for local street work.

McGhee noted that local streets are in bad shape for a number of reasons including this winter's freeze and thaw periods that wreaked havoc on the roads. He added that a lot of the streets are built on clay foundations which hinder drainage.

"We're going to spend $500,000 this spring and hit the worst areas on Liberty and River Streets," he said. "We're then going to use the PACER system to prioritize the rest of the city's streets to rate what shape they're in objectively … In 2023, 80 percent of streets were rated as bad so the problems aren't new. There's been no work done in the last 25 years."

See ADDRESS, Page A7

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
The City of Buchanan will be constructing a new 24-inch sanitary sewer mainline starting from the Wastewater Treatment Plant North of 3rd Street through downtown. Additionally, the storm sewer and water main will be upgraded along with new curb/roads/sidewalk.

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Trial date set for man charged with killing Eau Claire firefighter

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

ST. JOSEPH — A trial date has been set for an Eau Claire man accused in the death of an Eau Claire firefighter last fall.

Rigoberto Gomez, 47, of Eau Claire, was bound over for trial in Berrien County Trial Court late Friday after a preliminary hearing held Feb. 25 and March 7. Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gary Bruce presided over the preliminary hearing and made his ruling after hearing from five witnesses.

Gomez

The case is being heard in St. Joseph after Judge Gordon Hosbein who presides over the Niles courthouse recused himself from the case due to a conflict of interest.

Berrien County Assistant Prosecutor Kate Arnold said the next court dates in the case are a case conference on April 21, a status conference on May 12 and a jury trial set for the weeks of May 20-23 and May 27-30.

Gomez is facing eight felony charges including two she added at the conclusion of the preliminary hearing on March 7. The two new charges are felon in possession of a firearm and an additional count of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

The original six charges were open murder, assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder, assault with a dangerous weapon and three counts of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. Arnold said the jury will decide what degree of murder to possibly convict Gomez on during their deliberations.

Maximum sentences for the eight charges range from life in prison without the chance for parole down to consecutive two year prison terms for the felony firearm charges. Gomez remains in jail where he has been since his arrest shortly after the incident.

Testimony at the preliminary hearing came from Elizabeth Harper, Gomez's girlfriend, two people at the bar that night, Berrien County Sheriff's Lt. Thad Chartrand, the lead officer in the investigation and Sgt. Brandon Crosby, a K-9 handler. Crosby and his dog found the gun in the location Harper said she had thrown it.

The incident occurred shortly after midnight Nov. 2 outside a bar in downtown Eau Claire and resulted in the death of firefighter Chad Medlin and the wounding of another man, Leonardo Demarco. Deputies were called on reports of a shooting at the intersection of Main and Elm Streets in the village.

Deputies found a victim later identified as Medlin shot and unresponsive with life threatening injuries. Another victim, Leonardo Demarco, 39, of Eau Claire, was found shot with non-life threatening injuries. Both were transported to Spectrum Lakeland Health Hospital where Medlin, 36, of Benton Harbor, was pronounced deceased.

Gomez was identified by witnesses as a suspect in the incident. Several addresses were checked and he was arrested at a home in Coloma Township.

The Coloma address belonged to Harper's mother and Harper was later arrested for tampering with evidence and being an accessory after the fact.

Harper, 43, of Stevensville, pleaded guilty to tampering with evidence by disposing of the gun used in the crime. She was sentenced a month ago to two years probation, 180 days in jail with credit for 84 days served, 100 hours community service and $678 in fines and costs.

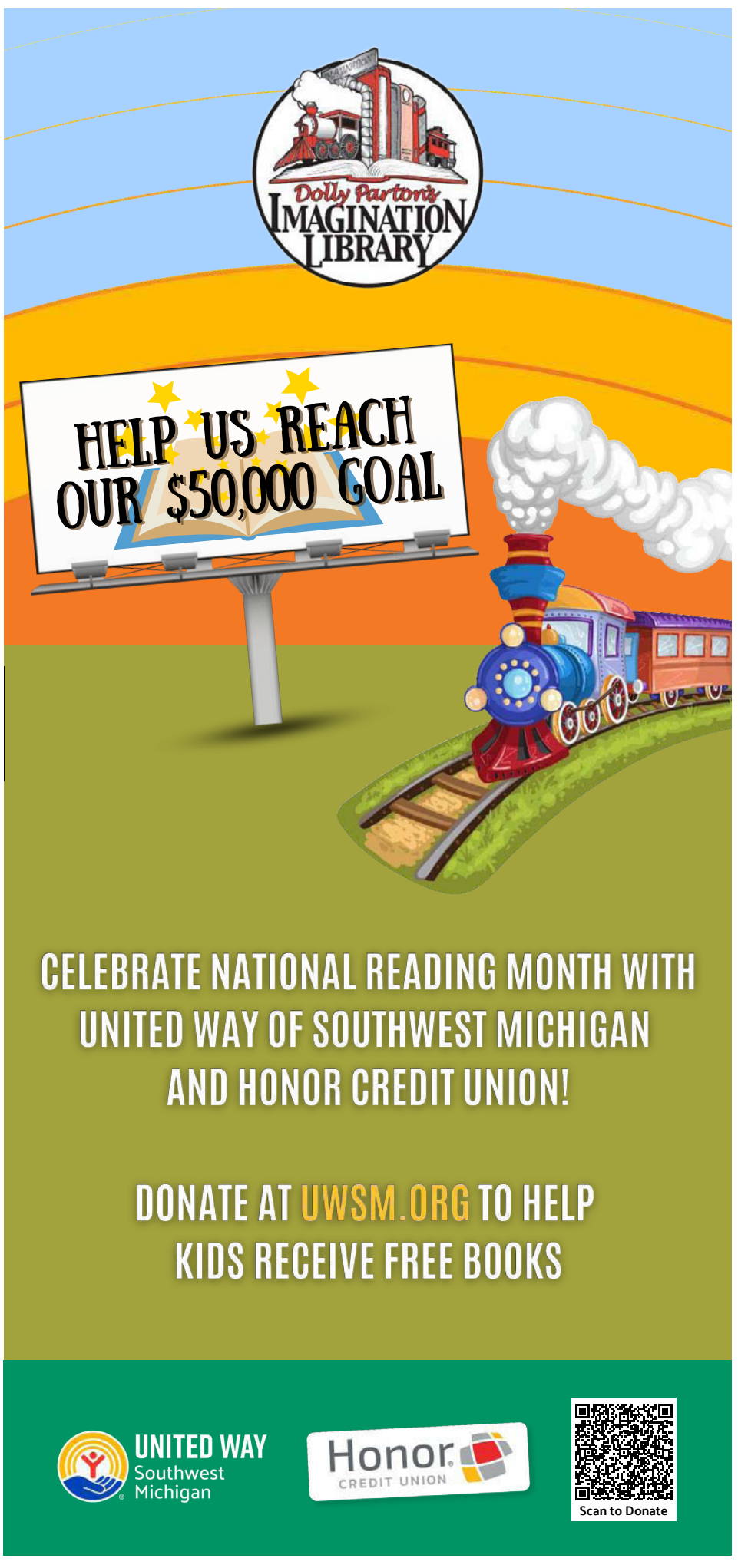
Complaint and warrant information in the court file indicated that witnesses said the altercation began inside a bar in Eau Claire with Medlin making comments about "Gomez being a person who beats on his wife." The men and others went outside and the argument continued.

A person tried to step between the two to calm them down and asked Gomez to put away his gun. At some point, Gomez had a clear shot of Medlin, pointed the gun at him and fired one shot, striking Medlin in the chest. Medlin fell to the ground and Gomez fled.

NILES RESIDENT CELEBRATES 101 YEARS

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Brentwood at Niles resident Jeanette Thornton celebrated her 101st birthday Monday with much fanfare. A Niles native, Thornton was still doing yard work and shoving snow at the age of 95. According to Thornton, her secret to living a long life is "to keep moving."
Pictured from left to right: Linda Duncan, Gale Risner,Steve Thornton, Jeanette Thornton.



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MGCF awards grants to local organizations

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

BUCHANAN — One area organization recently granted more than $145,000 to organizations in Berrien and Cass counties.

The Board of Trustees for Michigan Gateway Community Foundation have approved the granting of funds from the Foundation to the following programs

• $24,479.10 from the Help4Homes Fund to the City of Niles for home repairs for low income and senior owned homes in Niles.

• $7,000 from the Niles Area Fund for the Greater Niles Chamber of Commerce to be used for the creation of digital storefronts for nonprofit organizations located in Niles.

• $835.41 from the Cass Community Fund for Cass Area Artists to support the regional art exhibit at the Cass County Regional Gallery in Cassopolis.

• $2,000 from the Cass Community Fund for the Cass County Historical Society to assist in painting of the interior of the historical Red Brick Schoolhouse.

• $20,000 from the Buchanan Area Fund and Walt Schirmer Jr Fund to The Salvation Army for rental and utility assistance not covered by MEAP throughout south Berrien County.

• $5,000 from the Youth Advisory Council Fund for United Way to support their Cass County Backpack Program.

• $1,075 from the Youth Advisory Council Fund for Buchanan Community Schools to support their Positive Attendance Program.

• $14,471 From the Catherine and Louis Desenberg Fund and the B.R. & Marjorie H. Desenberg Endowment to the Buchanan District Library for the purpose of their construction capital campaign.

• $5,000 from the Unity Fund for the Buchanan Area Senior Center to assist in replacing fitness equipment with new models with body scanning functions.

• $2,350 from the Walter E. Schirmer Jr Fund for One Buchanan to support their Empowering Women Forum.

• $7,000 from the Unity Fund, Corrie Listenberger Bair Fund, Ann S. Cone Fund for Families & Youth and the Youth Advisory Council Fund. These awards will support Rising Kite's distribution of resource bags and compassionate assistance to families navigating a Down Syndrome diagnosis across Berrien County.

• $5,000 from the Walter E. Schirmer Jr Fund to the City of Buchanan to fund a National Register nomination for Days Avenue and the Mill Race Historic District.

• $10,000 from the Walter E. Schirmer Jr Fund and the Mahlon J. and Thelma C. Smith Endowment for Niles to provide scholarships and support to Fernwood Botanical Garden's summer outdoor education camps.

• $2,300 from the Youth Advisory Council Fund to the Buchanan District Library to support the Buchanan Backpack Program.

• $15,637 from the Walter E. Schirmer Jr Fund and Youth Advisory Council Fund to support the Lake Michigan Steamworks program with purchases of 3D printers, CAD-capable laptops, and necessary upgrades to their 3D printing room.

• $8,000 from Youth Advisory Council Fund and the Healthy Youth Healthy Seniors Fund for cultural arts programming at the Buchanan District Library and Buchanan Area Senior Center.

• $10,000 from the Buchanan Area Fund and the George W. Romney Fund for signage at the Myron Perlman Nature Preserve, allowing for accessible trails for volunteer-led school field trips and self-guided access to the preserve.

Founded in 1978, Michigan Gateway Community Foundation serves southern Berrien County and Cass County Michigan. The Foundation was established with gifts from many citizens in amounts ranging from a few dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Only the income generated by the investment of these gifts is used in grant making. A gift to the community funds, such as those from Niles, Buchanan, and Cass County, serve these communities in perpetuity.

The Foundation accepts grant proposals two times each year with submission dates of August 1, and February 1. Prompt consideration is given to all grant requests, with decisions usually available within one month. Each proposal will be evaluated by the Foundation for its potential value to the community and for the availability of funding resources.

For more information on Michigan Gateway Community Foundation, or to make a contribution that supports your community, contact Michael P. Rowland at 111 Days Avenue, Buchanan, MI 49107, visit www.mgcf.org, or call (269) 695-3521.

Illinois woman gets jail for vehicle theft

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — An Illinois woman who stole a car in Illinois before ending up being stopped in Berrien County was sentenced Monday in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse.

Quantina Washington, 32, of Illinois, pleaded guilty to third degree fleeing and eluding police and receiving, concealing or possession of a stolen vehicle and was sentenced to concurrent terms of seven and 11 months in jail with credit for 83 days served. She must pay $326 in fines and costs.

Washington

The incident occurred Dec. 18, 2024 in Galien.

Defense attorney Carri Briseno reported that Washington is on felony probation in Cook County, Illinois. She said Washington had taken Ecstasy drugs within 48 hours of this incident and was having a panic attack.

"She took a car in Illinois and drove here," Briseno said. "She said she was trying to get away from people here. I'm asking you consider a lesser sentence of even time served. I think it's better that their (Illinois) tax dollars are spent serving her."

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein called the incident troubling. He wished Washington well in the future including finding the location of her children.

A Niles man was sentenced to jail, probation and community service for felony drunk driving.

John David Harrell, 61, of Niles, pleaded guilty to third offense drunk driving and was sentenced to two years probation, 180 days in jail with credit for four days served, 90 days tether, 480 hours of community service and $743 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Dec. 15, 2024 in Niles Township. His blood alcohol level was .17, more than twice the legal limit. His previous drunk driving convictions were in 1992 and 2010.

Briseno said Harrell made a number of bad decisions on the day of the incident including drinking with friends after being sober for two years and then getting into a car and driving. "He's certainly old enough to know better," she said.

Briseno noted that Harrell has some significant health problems and has some upcoming scheduled surgeries.

"I made a mistake, I'm sorry for that, it was just a bad day, Harrell said.

"I look at the seriousness of the incident, rehabilitation and the danger posed to society," Judge Hosbein said. "You need some rehabilitation and some retribution … This is a serious offense, your actions have consequences. This is a minimal sentence, you could have been sent to prison."

Another Niles man who broke into a neighbor's home was sentenced to probation.

Gonzalo Gonzales, 49, of Niles, pleaded guilty to attempted malicious destruction of property $1,000 to $20,000, attempted resisting and obstructing police and attempted third-degree home invasion and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for 38 days served and $716 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Dec. 22, 2024 in Niles Township.

Gonzales apologized for his actions. Defense attorney Shayne Williams said her client has been diagnosed with mental health problems and has applied for disability. She said that Gonzales believed that neighbors had taken items from his property.

"One of the purposes of a sentence is rehabilitation," Judge Hosbein said. "You need to recognize what makes you so impulsive and recognize that there are different avenues for solving problems. You can't take the law into your own hands and go into someone else's house."

In other sentencings:

• Danzick Delane Burns, 18, of Indiana, pleaded guilty to attempted carrying a concealed weapon and was sentenced to credit for four days served and $798 in fines and costs. The incident occurred Dec. 19, 2024 in Buchanan Township.

• Felicia Hood, 35, of Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to larceny $1,000 to $20,000 and receiving, concealing or possession of a financial transaction device and was sentenced to one year probation, credit for two days served, 50 hours of community service, $886 in fines and costs and $2,052.78 in restitution. The incident occurred March 8, 2024 in Niles Township.

• Chika Nwokah, 41, of Mishawaka, pleaded guilty to fourth degree fleeing and eluding police and was sentenced to one year in jail with credit for 294 days served and $198 in fines and costs. The incident occurred May 6, 2023 in Niles.

Nwokah

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
Notre Dame senior Tess Jacob helps paint a mural, one of the activities that enabled a diverse group of students to bond and build trust during their time in Rome.

ND students learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, work for peace

COMMUNITY REPORT

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — For Tess Jacob, a University of Notre Dame senior majoring in global affairs, a recent intercultural encounter in Rome provided a deeply humanizing way to understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The February trip, which included fellow Notre Dame students as well as both Arab and Jewish students from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University, did not focus on the grim statistics of the conflict or the unrelenting shock of media headlines.

Instead, the trip focused on the importance of understanding narratives, pursuing respectful dialogue and developing a deeper understanding of people who hold different perspectives. In this way, it built upon the University of Notre Dame's larger focus on civil dialogue and the empathetic, people-first approach it has taken to teaching and learning about the conflict.

"My academic career at Notre Dame has involved reading, writing and talking about conflict, but I have never had an opportunity like this to meet and engage with the people who are living through it," Jacob said. "This was a unique experience. It was about building a space where people felt comfortable in expressing their views and also being able to see each other in a different light. Ultimately, this provided the foundation for a nuanced and empathetic dialogue that was enriching and enlightening."

Seeing shared humanity

And that, according to Notre Dame professors Mahan Mirza and Tzvi Novick, was the goal of the trip: an encounter that humanized people directly impacted by a deeply entrenched global conflict.

The two instructors co-teach a related class on the conflict, "Israel, Palestine and What We Owe Each Other," and co-lead a series of related talks as part of this year's Notre Dame Forum. Mirza and Novick co-led the trip along with Elitzur A. Bar-Asher Siegal, a colleague at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Together, the three instructors drew on their experience of bringing different audiences together in dialogue, working with partner organizations to facilitate an impactful encounter. In addition to participating in dialogue sessions, attendees pursued a variety of connection-building activities, such as painting a mural, touring Rome's landmarks and attending an audience with Pope Francis.

"As I have processed the horrors of the violence in the region, I have recently found myself struggling to keep hope alive," said Mirza, teaching professor in Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs and executive director of the school's Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion. "But after witnessing the transformation of students as they learn with and about each other through this kind of powerful encounter, and after seeing them imagine a different kind of future together, it becomes impossible not to hope."

The encounter made the conflict real, said Novick, the Abrams Professor of Jewish Thought and Culture in Notre Dame's Department of Theology. And it also made the humanity of others real — something Novick said can change the way people think about the conflict.

"You simply can't speak or think about the conflict in the same way when, for every statement that someone makes about a Palestinian or an Israeli, you can call to mind the name and something of the personality, and the personal story, of someone whom you sat down to a meal with, or spoke with directly, or painted a painting with," Novick said. "There were plenty of strong words and raised voices throughout our conversations; these were not kumbaya circles by any means. And yet, everyone sat and ate with each other and genuinely appreciated the opportunity to learn more about each other."

Students said they gained tangible benefits from the experience. For Majdulin Mujahed, a Palestinian student from Tel Aviv University, it was a chance

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Niles Daily Star

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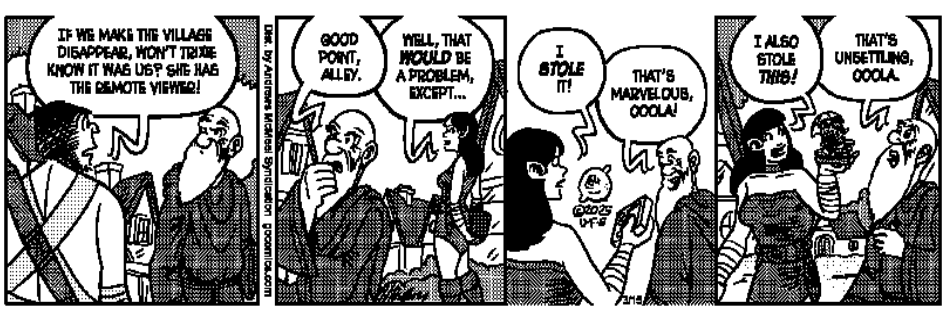
COMICS & PUZZLES

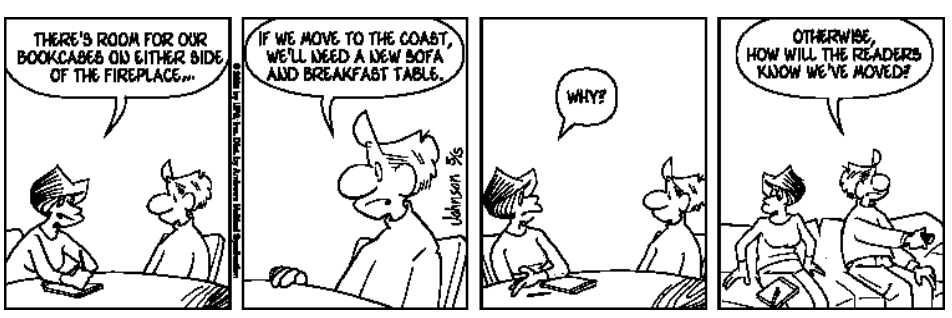
ADAM

I LOVE SATURDAYS.
MOST PEOPLE DO.
TAP TAP
MOST PEOPLE?? WHO WOULDN'T LIKE SATURDAYS??
WELL... PEOPLE WHO WORK ON SATURDAYS.
WOW. THOSE POOR MISGUIDED PEOPLE.
MM. NOW SHOO. I HAVE WORK TO DO.
SAD TAPPING

ALLEY OOP


IF WE MAKE THE VILLAGE DISAPPEAR, WON'T TRIXIE KNOW IT WAS US? SHE HAS THE REMOTE VIEWER!
GOOD POINT, ALLEY.
WELL, THAT WOULD BE A PROBLEM, EXCEPT...
I STOLE IT!
GOOD VI-S
THAT'S MARVELOUS, OOOLA!
I ALSO STOLE THIS!
THAT'S UNSETTLING, OOOLA.

ARLO & JANIS


THERE'S ROOM FOR OUR BOOKCASES ON EITHER SIDE OF THE FIREPLACE...
IF WE MOVE TO THE COAST, WE'LL NEED A NEW SOFA AND BREAKFAST TABLE.
WHY?
OTHERWISE, HOW WILL THE READERS KNOW WE'VE MOVED?

BIG NATE

NATE, ARE YOU MAKING PROGRESS ON CLEANING YOUR LOCKER?
FRANCIS IS.
HE'S BEEN WORKING ON IT ALL WEEK.
AND HOW'S THAT GOING?
GASP!
NOT WELL.
I THINK I JUST SAW A BARRACUDA.

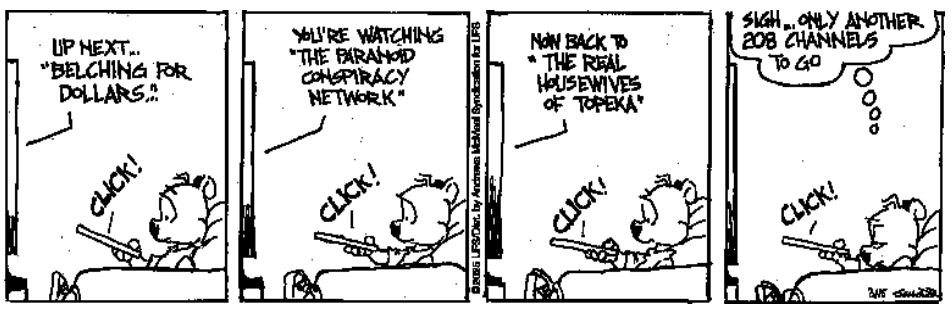
BORN LOSER

NATE, ARE YOU MAKING PROGRESS ON CLEANING YOUR LOCKER?
FRANCIS IS.
HE'S BEEN WORKING ON IT ALL WEEK.
AND HOW'S THAT GOING?
GASP!
NOT WELL.
I THINK I JUST SAW A BARRACUDA.

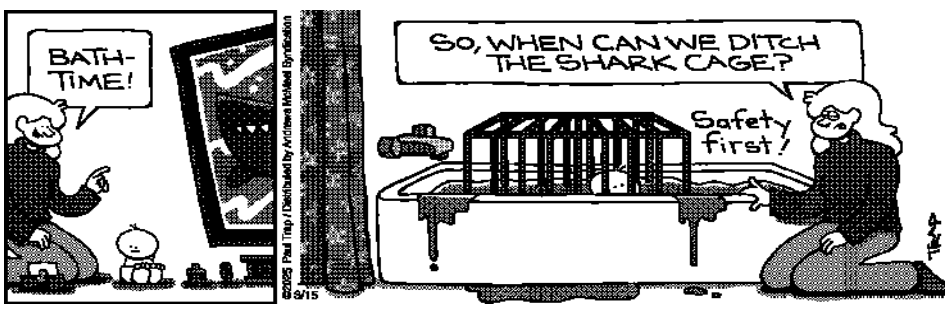
FRANK & ERNEST

Store Directory
PILLOWS AND COMFORTERS ARE ON THE THIRD FLOOR, AND LADDERS AND STEP STOOLS ARE IN THE BASEMENT.
SO, DOWN IS UP AND UP IS DOWN!

GRIZZWELLS


UP NEXT... "BELCHING FOR DOLLARS."
CLICK!
YOU'RE WATCHING "THE PARANOID CONSPIRACY NETWORK."
NOW BACK TO "THE REAL HOUSEWIVES OF TOPEKA"
SIGH... ONLY ANOTHER 208 CHANNELS TO GO

THATABABY



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SODOKU PUZZLE

HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

DIFFICULTY RATING: 5/5

ANSWER ON PAGE 6

		7			1	5		8
8	6			3				
5				4				
		3		1	4	2		
			5	6	9			
		1	3	2		4		
				5				9
				8			4	7
3		4	9			6		

MODERATELY CONFUSED

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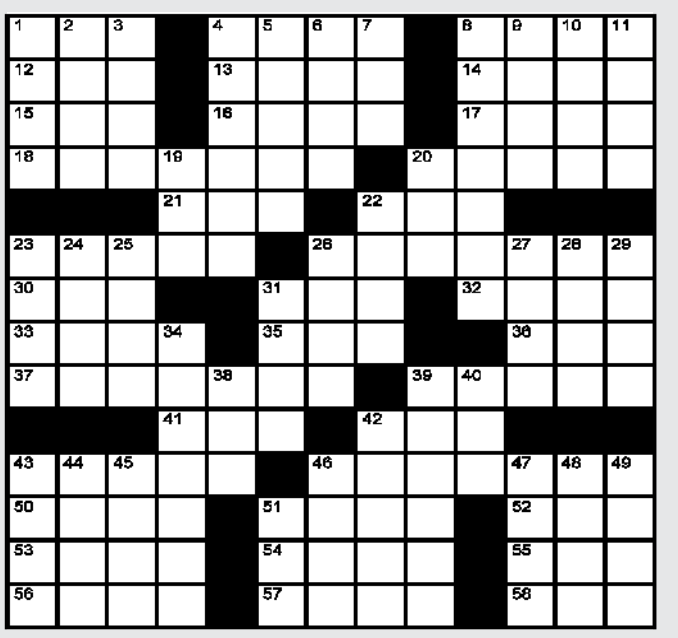
REALITY CHECK

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS
1 "— In Black"
4 Recipe amount
8 Thin layer of gold
12 "— — Believer"
13 — podrida
14 Early Ron Howard TV role
15 Actress — Ullmann
16 First name in fashion
17 Exploits
18 Much feared
20 Pushes
21 Work at
22 Sing a certain way
23 Jalopy
26 Origin
30 Clumsy fellow
31 — systems go
32 Actress — Louise
33 Cicatrix
35 Young canine
36 Cook in oil
37 Brave conduct
39 Ceremonies
41 Card up a sleeve
42 Stir-fry pan
43 Late
46 Kane's last word
50 "That's — — blow!"
51 Legal wrong
52 Sooner than
53 Cotton type
54 River in England
55 Twitch
56 Collar insert
57 Equal
58 "— me no questions"

DOWN
1 Gentle
2 Eastern ruler
3 Church area
4 Simple drawing
5 Tin Pan —
6 Luge
7 Crone
8 Epicure
9 — facto
10 Told a tale
11 Hardy heroine
19 Likely
20 Play on words
22 Aid
23 Blunt instrument
24 Political contest
25 Remotely
26 Morose
27 Put through a sieve
28 About (2 wds.)
29 Recites
31 Altar's place
34 Thoroughfare
38 Cold
39 List of names
40 DDE's nickname
42 From bad to —
43 Lights-out signal
44 Touched down
45 Italia's capital
46 Libertine
47 Second Greek letter
48 "Exodus" author
49 Ship level
51 Whirling toy

ANSWER ON PAGE 6



3-15

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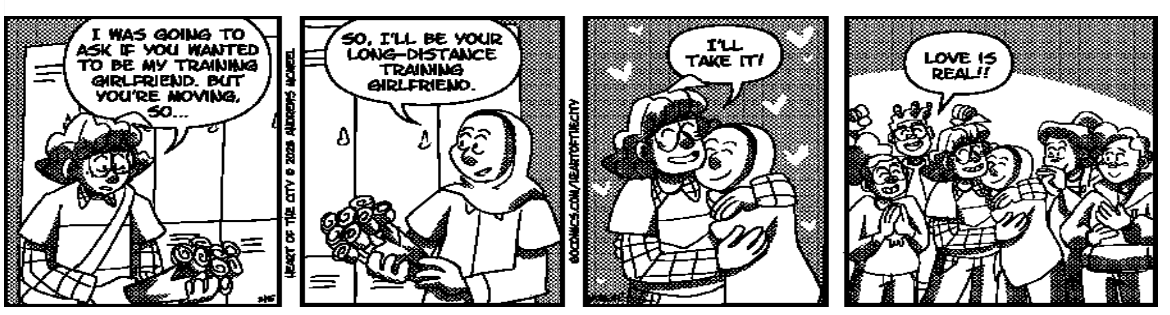
BREVITY

HEART OF THE CITY


I WAS GOING TO ASK IF YOU WANTED TO BE MY TRAINING GIRLFRIEND. BUT YOU'RE MOVING, SO...
SO, I'LL BE YOUR LONG-DISTANCE TRAINING GIRLFRIEND.
I'LL TAKE IT!
LOVE IS REAL!!

DEATH NOTICES

Shane Horsley, 55, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on March 5, 2025. Arrangements are pending and have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com

Jacqueline Porter, 44, of Niles, passed away, Saturday, March 01, 2025. Funeral services will be held on March 11, 2025, at Brown Funeral Home starting at 1:00PM.

Kirby Gordon Sircher, 67, passed away on Saturday, March 8, 2025 in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Carol Hoekstra, 86, passed away March 10, 2025. Funeral service March 19, 2025 at 1pm at Brown Funeral Home-Niles. Arrangements entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.

Ronald Alfred Phillips. 82, of Buchanan, passed away on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, leaving behind his wife Judy Phillips. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Patricia Wooldridge, 65, of Niles, passed away Tuesday, March 10, 2025. Funeral service on March 18, 2025 at 1:00PM. Arrangements entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com

Kenneth E. Purlee, 85, of Burr Oak, died Wednesday, March 12, 2025. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis.

OBITUARIES

Mary Knoll

November 10, 1927 - March 4, 2025

Mary Jean Knoll, 97, of Niles died peacefully March 4, 2025, in the comfort of her family home. Her life began November 10, 1927, in Niles, the third of four born to Tracy and Ruth Dickey. She married Robert A. Knoll, May 8, 1954, in St. Mary's Catholic Church in Niles.

Mary loved her community and was an active volunteer, serving as a supporter of the local history group, a long-time blood drive worker, fall rummage and craft sales and funeral lunches at her parish. Mary was admired for her unwavering commitment to her family, which she cherished throughout her life. She spent her life as a devoted homemaker, creating a warm and nurturing environment for her family. Her presence will be dearly missed, but her legacy of love and dedication will forever be a source of strength for her family. Mary Jean Knoll will be fondly remembered for her kindness, strength, and the love she shared with all who knew her.

Mary will be greatly missed by family and friends. She is survived by her beloved daughter, Ann Knoll, and son, Andrew (Helen J.) Knoll; two grandchildren, Michele Elizabeth (Dr. Simon) Watson, Gerald A. (Sarah Elizabeth) Knoll; three great grandchildren, Miles P. Freisinger, Page B. Knoll, Evelyn C. Knoll; step great granddaughter, Rowan Watson and a host of nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents Tracy and Ruth Dickey; her husband Robert; her daughter Barbara L. Knoll; her two sisters, Elaine Shipe and Eleanor Thayer and her brother John Dickey.

Family and friends will gather Friday March 14, 2025, in Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. with a rosary being held at 7:30 p.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated in St. Mark Catholic Parish Saturday March 15, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. 3 North 19 th Street Niles. Mary will be laid to rest in Calvary Cemetery.

The family prefers contributions in memory of Mary be made to St. Mary's of the Immaculate Conception - Christian Service Center 322 Clay Street or St. Mark Catholic Church 3 North 19 th Street Niles, reflecting her spirit of generosity and care for the community she so cherished.

Arrangements have been entrusted Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services Please share a memory or a message online: Halbritter-Wickens.com

Carroll Parmeter

November 1, 1937 - March 10, 2025

Carroll David Parmeter, 87, of Marcellus, Michigan, passed away at home on March 10, 2025, surrounded by the love of his family. Carroll was a man who was cherished and respected by his family and community and was a presence of integrity and love in the lives of all those who have known him. He was born on November 1, 1937, in Three Rivers, Michigan to Leonard Parmeter and Margaret Caul Parmeter. He graduated from Marcellus High School in 1956 and went on to follow in the footsteps of multiple generations of farmers, with his father taking on the role of his primary teacher in the practice of farming.

Carroll is survived by his wife and the love of his life Janice Martin Parmeter, as well as their children Jane (Jeff) Curtis, Sue (Dave) Arrington, Brenda (Alvin) White, Linda Matuszewski, Jonathan (Christine) Balog, Lesa Ward, and Ann (Jim) Parmeter-Cripps, as well as 15 grandchildren and many great grandchildren. Carroll and Janice met on a blind date, fell in love, and married six months later, and have lived their love story of mutual devotion and adoration for nearly 54 years.

He is remembered by his loved ones as bright and lively, emanating warmth, friendliness, and curiosity, and always enjoying a good conversation. He was quite the teaser and was able to find humor and crack sweet jokes with his family even through his dying days. For 23 years Carroll was committed to his role as the Supervisor of Flowerfield Township, where he was known as a thoughtful listener who truly enjoyed serving the people of the community. Until the very end of his life, he loved to innovate and design new ideas for woodworking, engineering, and building farm projects. He did yearly canning with his wife Janice, and they generously shared the fruits of their labor among family and friends, including maple syrup that Carroll made from sap he gathered and prepared in his self-built sugar shack. He loved to read the Word of God, as well as Bible commentaries, and was deeply concerned about the spiritual wellbeing of the world. He was a long-time attendee of Howardsville Gospel Chapel.

Carroll's family celebrates the legacy he leaves as an unwavering presence of loving strength, which lives on in the lives and hearts of his wife, loved ones, and the generations to follow him. Now and always, we honor and remember his ongoing and eternal presence, and know he lives on and abides in the glory and the love of God.

Visitation will be held on Saturday, March 15, 2025, 9-11am, with funeral following at 11am, at Howardsville Gospel Chapel, 53441 Bent Rd., Marcellus, MI 49067. Brock Brockway, Carroll's and Jan's grandson, will be officiating. Burial will be at Bly Cemetery, with luncheon to follow at the church.

According to Carroll's wishes, in lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Carroll's memory may be directed to Howardsville Christian School. Envelopes will be available at the visitation and funeral and may also be sent to the school at 53441 Bent Rd., Marcellus, MI 49067.

Online condolences may be shared at www.hohner-fh.com.

Cherie Dowling

January 8, 1955 - March 11, 2025

Cherie Ann Dowling, 70, of Niles passed away on March 11, 2025, at Hanson Hospice Center, Stevensville, after an extended illness. Cherie was born on January 8, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, the first child of Barbara and Elmer Gaedtke, who soon settled in Barb's hometown of Niles, Michigan.

Cherie lived in Niles nearly all her life. She graduated from Niles High School in 1973. Her classmates remember her as smiley and lively. She was a lot of fun!

From a very young age, Cherie loved animals. Drawn to most any creature she encountered, a familiar plea to her parents was: Can I keep him? While allowing Cherie her pets, Cherie's parents instilled a fun-loving, adventuresome spirit that stuck to her core. The family's boating and camping trips were among Cherie's favorite childhood memories, especially cruising the entire shoreline of Lake Michigan. The grown-up Cherie enjoyed many canoe trips with friends on Michigan rivers. As an adolescent in her lovely river city, she had the run of the town on her bike, and Cherie's passion for the great outdoors blossomed. She picked up interesting stones and rocks wherever her bike or her parents took her. An intrigue for fine jewelry as an adult was grounded in a fascination with the science of gem formation.

By the time she was a teenager, Cherie imagined a career in marine biology, but a different professional path began at age 15, when she became a cheery presence in the office of Niles dentist, Dr. James Cross. Dr. Cross was Cherie's mentor and friend. As she honed her skills of assisting him, Doctor Cross valued her adeptness and efficiency. She was smart, and interested in learning. But the office benefited most from Cherie's affinity with people. Her warmth and friendliness welcomed and relaxed dental patients for four decades.

Cherie was a nurturer - of plants in her gardens, of friendships, of her parents' comfort at their end of life.

As Cherie's health failed, she inspired family and friends with her optimism, keeping her sense of humor close. At the health clinics, at the hospital, and at the rehab center, Cherie was upbeat, trading joking banter with staff and patients, listening to anyone who needed an ear to lean on - and always caring. Cherie leaves a legacy of abounding kindness and generosity. Going forth with her virtues are son Ryne Dowling and his fiancee, Meredith Hollingsworth; daughter Jenna Treat and husband, T.J., and grandchildren Trey and Kennedy Treat.

A winning season for Notre Dame football lifted Cherie's spirits as she persevered through illness. She also liked to watch old movies, and with her sharp memory enjoyed naming the faces of the bygone actors. Nature remained close as she spotted deer and hawks outside her window. Cherie was preceded in death by her parents and her two brothers, Conrad and Chris Gaedtke, and two aunts Nancy Hatch and Ruth Ann Bever.

A sense of her German heritage was kindled within Cherie by the stories told by her grandmother and great-aunt. The sisters emigrated to Chicago together as young women. As a teen, Cherie would take the train into Chicago and stay with her great-aunt, Mitzi, who owned a small boutique. Cherie had the carefree excitement of being out and about the city streets on her own, meeting up with Aunt Mitzi at her shop, where Cherie's fashion sense and immaculate chic style was surely influenced. Cherie was beautiful, inside and out.

Cherie's family is thankful for all the care she received from the staff members of Fresenius Dialysis - Niles, The Timbers of Dowagiac and Hanson Hospice Center of Stevensville. Donations in Cherie's memory can be made to the Humane Society of Southwestern Michigan, 5400 S. Niles Rd. St. Joseph, Michigan, 49085

Arrangements have been entrusted Halbritter Wickens Funeral Services Please share a memory or a message online: Halbritter-Wickens.com

Andrene Heathcote

December 15, 1926 - February 22, 2025

Andrene Pernilla Heathcote, known to all her loved ones as Andy, 98, of Dowagiac, passed away peacefully at her home on Indian Lake on Saturday, February 22, 2025.

Andrene was born on December 15, 1926, in Chicago, Illinois, the daughter of the late Carl and Anna Granquist. She married her husband James (Jim) Heathcote on August 30, 1947, and they had two sons, Daniel and Robert. Andrene attended the University of Chicago to earn her Bachelor of Philosophy and then graduated from Michigan State University with her Masters of Teacher of Mathematics. She was employed by Lakeshore Public Schools from 1964 to 1986 where she taught 7th and 8th grade math.

After retirement Andrene went on to travel throughout the world with her husband and friends. Some highlights of her travels included visiting Kenya, England and California. She settled into her home on Indian Lake in 1991 where she spent time with friends and family including all her grandchildren who throughout the years loved to visit Grandma/Oma at the lake. Even into her 90's, Andrene was still in the kitchen making her delicious homemade turkey gravy for Thanksgiving dinners and setting out her special holiday dishes. She enjoyed spending time on the porch in the warmer months reading a good book, looking out at the lake and spending time catching up with neighbors,

See OBITUARIES, Page A7

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5-21 - Nunsense
9-18 - Heartbreak Hotel
11-19 - The Naughty List
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CROSSWORD ANSWER
From Page 5

M	E	N		D	A	S	H		G	I	L	T		
I	M	A		O	L	L	A		O	P	I	E		
L	I	V		O	L	E	G		U	S	E	S		
D	R	E	A	D	E	D		P	R	O	D	S		
			P	L	Y		H	U	M					
C	R	A	T	E		G	E	N	E	S	I	S		
O	A	F			A	L	L		T	I	N	A		
S	C	A	R		P	U	P			F	R	Y		
H	E	R	O	I	S	M		R	I	T	E	S		
			A	C	E		W	O	K					
T	A	R	D	Y		R	O	S	E	B	U	D		
A	L	O	W		T	O	R	T		E	R	E		
P	I	M	A		O	U	S	E		T	I	C		
S	T	A	Y		P	E	E	R		A	S	K		

SUDOKU ANSWER
From Page 5

4	3	7	2	9	1	5	6	8
8	6	2	7	3	5	9	1	4
5	1	9	6	4	8	7	3	2
7	5	3	8	1	4	2	9	6
2	4	8	5	6	9	1	7	3
6	9	1	3	2	7	4	8	5
1	7	6	4	5	3	8	2	9
9	2	5	1	8	6	3	4	7
3	8	4	9	7	2	6	5	1

LEARN

Continued from page A4

to move past cultural barriers and truly see other people.

"Everyone has a veiled window into their identity and self-perception, and it becomes slightly more visible at moments of challenge or comfort," Mujahed said. "This setting allowed me to glimpse beyond that veil and form a more intricate image of the person before me. I was thus able to understand the other's narrative on a deeper level."

For Tomy Stockman, a Jewish student from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the experience provided chances to authentically bond with people from different backgrounds, and to witness fellow participants doing so.

"I saw an Arab student and a Jewish student, who just a moment ago had a major argument about fundamental principles of this conflict, comfort each other in their frustration moments afterward, and then share a pasta dinner an hour later," Stockman said. "This has shown me that building fruitful dialogue is only possible through creating a sense of community — being able to disagree but sticking together through the pain with mutual understanding and love."

Max Kitchell, a first-year global affairs and economics major from Notre Dame, appreciated the opportunity to take his learning experience beyond the classroom and hear others' perspectives. The result, he discovered, was a deeper, richer understanding of the human side of conflict.

"I think it is easy to say, 'I've taken all the classes, I've gone to all the lectures, I've read the books, what more is there to understand?'" Kitchell said. "But this dialogue experience showed me how little I still understood. There is always more nuance, more complexity to grasp; dialogue reveals layers."

Working for empathy and peace

One of the emotional highlights of the trip, participants said, was an audience with Pope Francis, during which students presented him with a heartfelt letter, handwritten in four languages: Arabic, English, Hebrew and Spanish.

"We came to seek not consensus but the capacity to understand each other," the students wrote. "We emerge from this journey with deeper connections with one another, and thus with hope. As these encounters have shown us, honest cross-cultural conversations help us see each others' dignity through and in our differences.

"May the Church continue to support these encounters for other communities and ours. Please join us in praying for the courage to dialogue and for peace."

That meeting underscored the importance of dialogue and encounter, something Annika Singh, a sophomore economics major from Notre Dame, experienced repeatedly on the trip.

"Though each day had disagreements and tension, the group was united in its commitment to honesty and empathy with each other," Singh said. "I've returned from this experience empowered to engage in conversations with people I may disagree with, keeping in mind that we all have common hopes and values we can work toward together."

Partnerships make experience possible

The trip was made possible thanks to the generous support of many partners. Notre Dame worked with Middle Meets, an organization co-founded by Stockman that includes Jewish and Arab university students at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University, under the guidance of Professor Bar-Asher Siegal.

The encounter also received generous support from Scholas Occurentes, an international organization founded by Pope Francis that seeks to create a culture of encounter by bringing young people from different backgrounds together in dialogue; and from Notre Dame Global, which hosted a gathering at Notre Dame Rome.

In addition, the trip received additional funding from several Notre Dame sources, including the Keough School's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies and its Ansari Institute for Global Engagement with Religion, and from the Abrams Chair in Jewish Thoug ht and Culture in the Department of Theology, part of Notre Dame's College of Arts & Letters.

PET OF THE WEEK

Daisy Boy is an energetic, outgoing five-month-old tuxedo kitten who loves to explore and play with toys. He adores attention and is always ready for a cuddle session. Daisy Boy is eager to find a family who will cherish his playful spirit and give him the love and affection he deserves. He is set to be neutered, is up-to-date shots and is FeLV-FIV negative. Contact Paws of Hope at adoptions@pawsofhope.org.

ADDRESS

Continued from page A2

His efforts drew praise from commissioners. City Commissioner Dan Vigansky was the first to say he appreciated McGhee's efforts. "I can't thank you enough for the work you're doing," he said. "People don't understand how long I've been screaming about it."

Commissioner Patrick Swem noted that the next several months won't be easy for residents. "It's going to be a tough year but everyone is working together," he said. "2025 is a year of action for the city of Buchanan with all the projects we have going on. It took us a while, but the city is taking action."

Projects Swem mentioned included the completion of the city's DPW building, the demolition of blighted properties, the library expansion, the trail expansion, the downtown infrastructure work, the riverfront boat launch, the Days Avenue culvert repair and the demolition of the old feed mill.

"What we're accomplishing today is what we talked about years ago," Mayor Mark Weedon said. "It's exciting to see. We're finally seeing the commission and the city staff coming together."

Commissioners took another action which they hope will bring more growth to not only the city but surrounding townships. They approved hiring the Jones & Henry company to conduct a feasibility study about the capacity of the city's water and sewer systems.

McGhee said the city's systems were built with more capacity than just what is needed to serve city residents. He said the $20,000 cost is expected to be split between the city and Buchanan and Bertrand Townships.

Swem said that expanding water and sewer services to the townships will help everyone and promote growth. It will also allow the city to keep rates steady for city customers.

Monday's meeting also featured action on other items such as the first reading of a new rental housing ordinance and going on the record opposing Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's plan to increase landfill tipping fees to pay for road repairs. Commissioners said increasing tipping fees would hurt the Southeast Berrien County Landfill.

Commissioners heard from one local businessman who urged them to not have excessive fees associated with the rental housing ordinance. City Clerk Kalla Langston-Weiss said that the fee will be $40 or less every two years and that the emphasis will be on safety and reducing fire hazards. The commission will vote on whether to adopt it at their March 24 meeting.

OBITUARIES

Continued from page A6

friends and loved ones.

Andrene lived a full life of love and purpose and was also a longtime member of the Silver Creek United Methodist Church where she at one time served as Secretary and a Board Chairman along with volunteering countless hours.

Surviving are her two sons - Daniel Heathcote and Robert (Kam) Heathcote; six grandchildren - Denielle (Bryan) Smith, Aaron Heathcote, Devon Heathcote, Drew Heathcote, Carly (Yana) Heathcote and Erica Heathcote; and great-grandchild, A. Smith. She is also survived by good friends Sally Ernst, Barb DeWolf, Kathy Elghammer, along with other dear friends and extended family.

Preceding her in death was her husband of 50 years - James Heathcote, who passed on September 9, 1997.

Honoring her wishes, cremation has taken place. A Memorial Service to celebrate Andrene's life will be held at 11:00am on Friday, June 6, 2025, at Silver Creek United Methodist Church, 31994 Middle Crossing Rd, Dowagiac. Arrangements have been entrusted to Clark Chapel - Starks Family Funeral Homes, Dowagiac. Please visit Andrene's personalized webpage to share a memory or leave a condolence to her family at www.clarkch.com.

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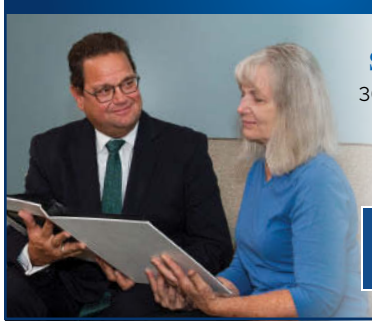
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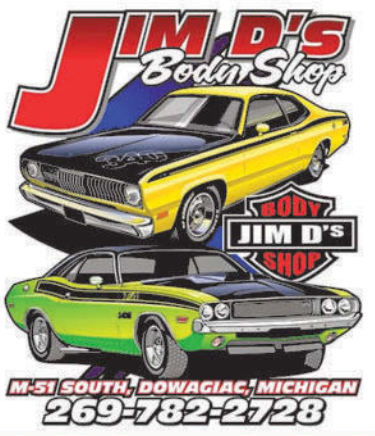
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Niles man charged with accosting children, other crimes

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

HOWARD TOWNSHIP — A 38 year-old Niles man has been arrested and charged following an investigation into allegations of child sex crimes, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 5:45 p.m. Sunday, the Cass County Sheriff's Office conducted a search warrant on an address on Lake St. in Cass County's Howard Township. The results of this search warrant was the arrest of Stephen Frank Gill, 38, of Niles, and the collection of evidence relating to criminal matters. Gill was arraigned in the Cass County's District Court Tuesday for the charges of accosting children for immoral purposes, using a computer to commit a crime, and possession of a controlled substance. Bond was set at $50,000.

The case remains under investigation and anyone who has information regarding this case is asked to contact the Cass County Sheriff's Office at (269) 445-1560.

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Jerry Flenar presents a plaque to Fran Tuite.

GROUND

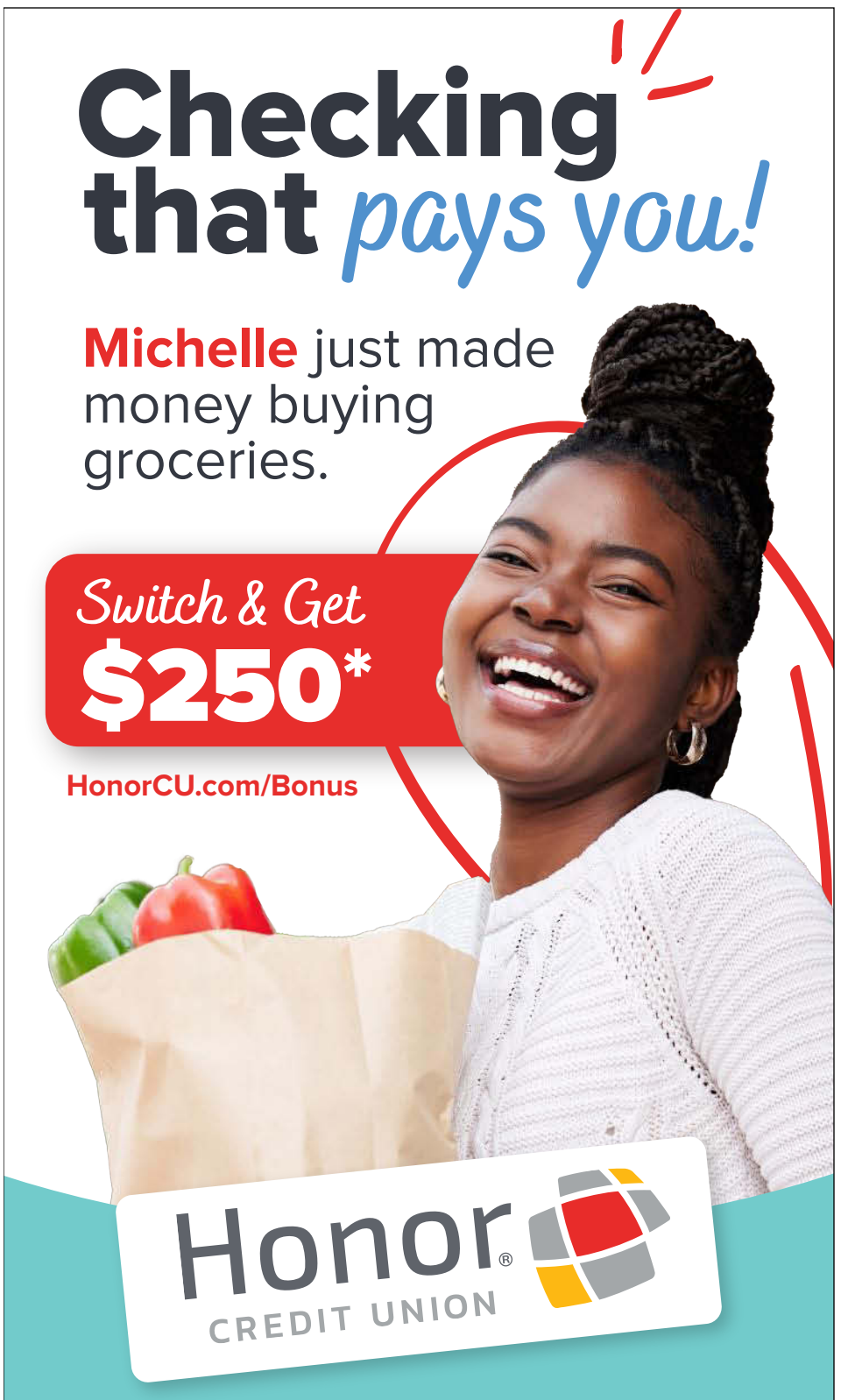
Continued from page A1

the trail extension will create between historic and architecturally significant assets, walkable arts and culture experiences, special experiences in adjacent natural resources and more, the city believes the McCoy's Creek Trail Extension Project essentially elevates the existing trail into "Cultural Trail Status" and creates a "Walkable Treasure Trove" that will be of regional significance.

"With over 13,000 miles of state-designated trails, Michigan is a national leader in trail transportation across the state," said Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grants Coordinator Kelsey Dietz. "This figure does not even include all of the local trails, which adds thousands of miles for the enjoyment of residents and visitors to our great state.

Dietz said the Michigan DNR is "a proud partner" of the project through funding through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The trust fund was established in 1976 and is funded through oil and gas revenue on leases and mineral royalties on state land. Since its Inception nearly 50 years ago, it has funded the acquisition and development of thousands of parks and trails across the state.

"Projects like this do not just happen," she said. "It takes a lot of work to accomplish this. From all involved, the Michigan DNR would like to congratulate the City of Buchanan and all of the local partners who have made this a reality."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SCHOOL

Continued from page A1

it's just whether we fill them externally or internally and we don't know at this point. We don't want to put people in a position where we're telling somebody in two or three months that we're letting them go."

Board members learned that three high school students had submitted applications to join the school board as a non-voting member. Board members discussed the idea earlier this year and asked for students to submit applications. They are expected to vote on who they want to join the board at their next meeting on March 24.

Walker introduced board members to a new software app the district is using called Apptegy Rooms. He said the app is being introduced this year and will be fully available starting in the fall. He noted that the app gives teachers, coaches and any school personnel a way to communicate with parents.

He said the district had been thinking about using Google Classroom but found out that it didn't do all the things they wanted it to do in terms of communicating with parents. It also allows parents to see all the curriculum materials teachers are using in the classroom, he said.

The board's March 24 meeting is expected to feature action on replacing card readers that access buildings and rooms as well as new surveillance cameras.

Meetings are now being held in the Brandywine Innovation Academy Conference Room at 1830 S. 3rd St.

PROGRESS

Continued from page A1

"It was an emotional good time," he said, "sharing our students' stories and success" in the leadership-development program.

"These students are graduating, on average, with a higher GPA than any other group," Odenwald said. "Of all the things we've tried the last five years, I feel this is the thing I may be most proud of."

In other business, trustees approved a new program, a credential for certified medication aides.

Dean of Nursing and Health Services Dr. Melissa Kennedy said, "The biggest local health-care employer is Corewell Health, but we also have a lot of long-term care facilities. This is for students who have been CNAs (certified nursing assistants) for two or more years who can do a 100-hour course heavy in pharmacology, so they can help RNs and LPNs, giving our residents a higher quality of care."

"We need agility in rural areas to train people for jobs needed at that time," Odenwald added. "We cannot let this community be left behind because we don't have a trained workforce. That's about $6,000 a year more in earnings" with the credential.

The board also accepted $600 in two gifts to the college and acknowledged 12 donations totaling $10,525 to the SMC Foundation.

TRIAL

Continued from page A1

order to become competent.

Perry's next court date will be a case conference on April 2 at 8:30 a.m. in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles courthouse. No other court dates after that have been set yet. Perry remains lodged in the Berrien County Jail.

The four charges Perry is facing are open murder, being a felon in possession of a firearm and two counts of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. The shooting took place at Botica's home in the 1200 block of North 12th Street in Niles on Sept. 30, 2023.

A preliminary hearing held in 2023 included testimony from two witnesses. One witness was at the home at the time of the shooting and said that the dispute between Perry and Botica was over drugs and money. The witness said that Botica told him that Perry owed him money and was going to help Botica start a marijuana grow operation.

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BASKETBALL

Dowagiac's Melvin hangs up the whistle

By SCOTT HASSINGER
Leader Publications Contributor

DOWAGIAC — After five decades of officiating basketball games, Dowagiac resident Randy Melvin has hung up his whistle for good.

Melvin recently officiated his final game a week ago Friday, the Division 3 district girls' championship at Bridgman High School between No. 1-ranked Niles Brandywine and White Pigeon.

The 2024-25 season marked Melvin's 50th year as a registered basketball official with the Michigan High School Athletic Association.

A second-string player at Dowagiac Union High School where he graduated from in 1972, Melvin was offered an opportunity by the late James Tansey, the Roadrunners' head coach at the time, to join the Southwestern Michigan College men's basketball program as a walk-on.

Dowagiac finished 19-1 and advanced to the state quarterfinals in Melvin's senior year where the Chieftains lost to Muskegon Heights. One of Melvin's teammates that season was junior Edgar Wilson who went on to play basketball at Michigan State University.

"When I was a high school senior, Southwestern Michigan College had just started a men's basketball program and Coach Tansey offered me a chance to join the team as a walk-on. Then he asked me if I'd ever given any thought to officiating. I told him no, but I turned around and went and got myself registered and began officiating several middle school and freshmen games to start with. I can remember getting paid $12 to officiate a freshman game back then," Melvin recalled.

It was the beginning of a long career on the hardwood for Melvin wearing the stripes.

Melvin's longest officiating partner was Watervliet's Andy Saetre who he worked games with for 20 years from 1998-2018.

See MELVIN, Page B3

TANYA HAGEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
Dowagiac resident and registered game official Randy Melvin, left, discusses a call he made during a game this season with New Buffalo head coach Nathaniel Tripp.

BASKETBALL

Bobcats lead All-Lakeland with five first-team selections

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Lakeland Conference Champion Brandywine led the all-league girls basketball first team with five selections.

Runner-up Berrien Springs and Buchanan each had a pair of picks.

Representing the Bobcats on the first team were Adeline and Lily Gill, Miley Young, Adellyn Drotoz and Karleigh Byrd. Alyssa Carson and Katie Ailes, of Buchanan, were first-team selections and Berrien Springs' Aubree Smith and Zion Ellis rounded out the team.

Brandywine's Mackenna Price and Niyah Mason were Second-Team/Honorable Mention picks. Maddie Young, Justyce Cashier and Caitlyn Horvath were also Second-Team/Honorable Mention picks, as were Dowagiac's Marlie Carpenter and Zabrina Shivers.

All-Lakeland Conference
First Team
- Adeline Gill, Brandywine
- Lily Gill, Brandywine
- Miley Young, Brandywine
- Adelyn Drotoz, Brandywine
- Karleigh Byrd, Brandywine
- Aubree Smith, Berrien Springs
- Zion Ellis, Berrien Springs
- Alyssa Carson, Buchanan
- Kate Ailes, Buchanan

Second Team/Honorable Mention
- Mackenna Price, Brandywine
- Niyah Mason, Brandywine
- Addison Frakes, Berrien Springs
- Kathryn Bergan, Berrien Springs
- Lillian Weigand, Berrien Springs
- Adeline Weber, Berrien Springs
- Maddie Young, Buchanan
- Justyce Cashier, Buchanan
- Caitlyn Horvath, Buchanan
- Marlie Carpenter, Dowagiac
- Zabrina Shrivers, Dowagiac
- Javie Swift, Benton Harbor

WRESTLING

Ward named SW Michigan Wrestler of The Year

COMMUNITY REPORT

NILES — Niles' Maddison Ward was named the girls Wrestler of the Year on the All-Southwest Michigan Wrestling Team.

Ward finished 30-1, losing in the 155-pound state championship match. She won a state individual title in 2024 while wrestling at Brandywine.

See WARD, Page B2

BASKETBALL

REGIONAL CHAMPS

Team effort carries Brandywine girls to 45-32 win over KZoo Christian

By SCOTT HASSINGER
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — Team defense and Brandywine's unselfish play carried the top-ranked Lady Bobcats to a hard-fought 45-32 win over Kalamazoo Christian for a Division 3 regional championship Wednesday.

Brandywine (26-0) moves into Tuesday's 7 p.m. state quarterfinals against Grandville Calvin Christian (20-6) at Kalamazoo Loy-Norrix. Grandville Calvin Christian won its own regional by beating No. 2-rated Pewamo-Westphaila 39-36.

Hood, now 349-37 in 16 seasons at Brandywine with nine regional titles, stated afterwards that the latest title is bigger than the girls' basketball program.

"There's a lot of people who could learn stuff from our community. Its a group of hardworking people who show up and support our kids. I'm just so proud of these girls and the community. This isn't just a title for Brandywine girls basketball, its a Brandywine Bobcat Nation championship. It's about a network of people who give up countless hours as parents, staff, administration and volunteers in our Kiddie Cats' Program to help make us successful," Hood said.

Miley Young's full-court layup at the third-quarter buzzer put Brandywine up by 12, 32-19 entering the fourth quarter.

But Kalamazoo Christian chipped that deficit to just six points, 38-32 with 2:59 left in the game, following a pair of triples from Carien Ybema and Lily Manion and two free throws by four-time all-state candidate Jordyn Bonnema.

Brandywine forced Kalamazoo Christian into turnovers on two successive possessions and used a 7-0 run to seal the win. Young made 5-of-6 free throws in the last 1:28 and sophomore Lily Gill capped off the win with an uncontested layup with 6.9 seconds left.

"I expected a tough game like

See CHAMPS, Page B3

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WRESTLING

SMC's Hesson National Wrestling Coach of the Year

COMMUNITY REPORT

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College Wrestling Head Coach Todd Hesson's selection in Council Bluffs, Iowa, March 8, as National Wrestling Coaches Association Coach of the Year recognizes a remarkable three-year run since the program's revival in 2022 after a 30-year absence.

Hesson's Roadrunners three-peated the Michigan Community College Athletic Association (MCCAA) conference championship, then captured the 2025 Great Lakes District Championship in Illinois over three nationally-ranked competitors enroute to the NJCAA nationals.

At the Mid-America Center in Council Bluffs, the Roadrunners finished 14th in NJCAA Division I, with sophomores Colby Klinger and Nathan Andrina honored as All-Americans, joining Caeleb Ishmael from 2024, when SMC finished 17th in the country.

The past two seasons, SMC qualified the maximum 10 wrestlers for the national meet.

Hesson, who was also named Great Lakes District Wrestling Coach of the Year, continues to emphasize academics. In 2024, National Wrestling Coaches Association awards for NJCAA Scholar All-Americans included five Roadrunners, Nathan Andrina, Hector Garcia, Hunter Heath, Colby Klinger and Vinny Patierno.

All-American academic awards for 2025 are expected this summer.

BASKETBALL

Fitzgerald's Smith, Woodhaven's Roberts sign with SMC

COMMUNITY REPORT

DOWAGIAC — Cooper Roberts of Woodhaven High School and CaSaundra Smith of Warren Fitzgerald have signed their NJCAA Letter of Intents to play women's basketball in 1st Source Bank Fieldhouse for Coach Jay Jenkins and the Roadrunners starting in Fall 2025.

"Cooper shows great leadership skills on and off the floor and has a high basketball IQ," said Woodhaven Coach Rick Nielmi of Roberts.

"Cass has spent four years growing and maturing on and off the court in an amazing way," said Fitzgerald Coach JuWan Shakespear. "I'm excited to watch her grow even more in the adult world." Coach Jenkins added, "We are excited to add a versatile guard to our family."

In Jenkins' first season as coach and the program's second year back in intercollegiate competition after a 26-year hiatus, the 2023-2024 squad won the MCCAA Western Conference. The team then won the Great Lakes District B Tournament, earning a berth at the NJCAA National Championship in Joplin, Missouri, where they went 1-1, finishing the season at 27-5.

The past season ended in the District Semifinals with a 21-10 overall record. The Roadrunners were 9-5 in the Western Conference and fiercely defended home court, going 13-2 in the Fieldhouse. SMC set numerous school records along the way, including Team 2PT FG Made – Game (42), Team 3PT % - Game (61.5%), Team FT Made – Game (27), Team FT % - Game (27-30, 90.0%), Team Blocks – Game (6), Team Steals – Game (35) and Team Steals – Season (450).

WARD

Continued from page B1

Area wrestlers joining Ward on first team were Buchanan's Kadence Ashe at 135 pounds and Dowagiac's Cinthia Villegas at 145. Both were state qualifiers.

Samuel Adams of Marcellus was named the girls Coach of the Year.

Two area wrestlers were named to the boys first team. Sam Rucker of Niles earned a spot at 175 and Cal Chapman of Dowagiac at 285. Rucker (36-3) was fourth at state and Chapman (42-4) fifth.

Lakeshore's 106-pound state champion was named the boys Wrestler of the Year. Decatur coach Mitch Kennedy was Coach of the Year.

BOYS
FIRST TEAM

106: Pilot Swab (Lakeshore); 113: Kolton Burns (Decatur); 120: Aiden Munoz (Bangor); 126: Austin Garcia (Lawton); 132: Joelan Coyer (Lakeshore); 138: Cole Lausch (Lakeshore); 144: Aidan Wiggins (Decatur); 150: Mikey Yelding (South Haven); 157: Vernon Riggins (Lakeshore); 165: Brody Mead (Decatur); 175: Sam Rucker (Niles); 190: Rowan Bradford (Decatur); 215: Marvin Jones Jr. (Marcellus); 285: Cal Chapman (Dowagiac)

SECOND TEAM

106: Brody Ashley (Coloma); 113: Marcus Lowry (St. Joseph); 120: Matt Martel (Coloma); 126: Brady Baker (Lakeshore); 132: Evan Wilkes (St. Joseph); 138: Angel Guzman-Valle (Eau Claire); 144: Camron White (Dowagiac); 150: Gavin Keller (St. Joseph); 157: Leland Payne (Buchanan); 165: Riley Halverson (St. Joseph); 175: Jovany Raya (Eau Claire); 190: Joe Clayton (Coloma); 215: Hayden Groth (Dowagiac); 285: Brock Woodhouse (Marcellus)

HONORABLE MENTION

106: Judd Riggins (Lakeshore); Aidan Voorhees (Dowagiac); J.T. Isbrecht (Watervliet); 113: Bryson Coyer (Lakeshore); Keegan LeClear (St. Joseph); Markus Ottinger (Dowagiac); 120: Joel Pena (Decatur); Noah Dahlke (St. Joseph); Holden Carrington (Buchanan); Andrew Jarvis (Edwardsburg); 126: Roman Rodarte (Hartford); Luke Isbrecht (Watervliet); Jose Garcia (South Haven); 132: Ryder Gardner (Decatur); Cooper Mabry (Buchanan); Daniel White (Hartford); 138: Aaron York (Buchanan); Taurin Zimpleman (Edwardsburg); Caylen Tate (Berrien Springs); 144: Zayden Rowland (South Haven); Kholby Armijo (Paw Paw); Brody Winnell (Coloma); 150: Thor Baker (Decatur); Jacob Villegas (Dowagiac); 157: Carson Shugars (Decatur); Ethan Edsberg (Lakeshore); Leighton Osborn (Marcellus); 165: Cale Myers (Edwardsburg); Linken Birkhead (Hartford); Larsen Kibler (Berrien Springs); 175: Kameron Armijo (Paw Paw); Parker Wiggins (Decatur); Zacorious Tanner (Coloma); Alan Wegner (Cassopolis); 190: Trap Abbott (Bangor); Brendon Jackson (Bangor); 215: Lucas Zeiger (Buchanan); Enrique Macedo (Bangor); 285: Collin Sahs (St. Joseph); Andrew McKee (Brandywine); Chase Brawley (Niles)

GIRLS
FIRST TEAM

100: Serenity Hopkins (Lakeshore); 105: Maddie Moore (South Haven); 110: Jocelyn Saucedo (South Haven); 115: Emma Baker (Lakeshore); 120: Kaelyn Adamson (South Haven); 125: Jenna Bradford (Decatur); 130: Emmalee Krier (Paw Paw); 135: Kadence Ashe (Buchanan); 140: Amber Knight (South Haven); 145: Cinthia Villegas (Dowagiac); 155: Maddison Ward (Niles); 170: Carlee Osborn (Marcellus); 190: Evelyn Hegelmann (Bloomingdale); 235: Rowan Hegelmann (Bloomingdale)

SECOND TEAM

100: Molly Menzel (Bloomingdale); 105: Isla Reinhardt (Coloma); 110: Alexandra Jijon (Dowagiac); 115: Kloe Kiggins (Niles); 120: Madelyn Baker (Eau Claire);125: Madison Harrison (Marcellus); 130: Sophia Cottoni-Storel (Marcellus); 140: Makayla McWilliams (Marcellus); 145: Alice Giulianini (Buchanan); 155: Kady Sherrill (Paw Paw); 170: Angel Miller (Paw Paw); 190: Ayana Marshall (Watervliet); 235: Niomi Perez (Hartford)

Dowagiac athletes receive winter sports honors

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — The winter sports season is winding down and several Dowagiac athletes have been recognized for their efforts.

Below is a list of Dowagiac athletes named to All-Lakeland Conference teams, all-state teams and team awards.

Boys wrestling

Cal Chapman – 1st Team All-Conference, regional champion, Academic All-State, fifth place state qualifier, MVP

Hayden Groth – 1st Team All-Conference, Academic All-State, state qualifier

Marcus Ottinger – 1st Team All-Conference, Academic All-State, regional qualifier

Aiden Voorhees – 1st Team All-Conference

Cameron White – 1st Team All-Conference, state qualifier

Jacob Villegas – 1st Team All-Conference

Ryan Caldwell – 1st Team All-Conference

Maverick Baerg – 1st Team All-Conference

Wyatt Gerner – Honorable Mention

Weski Wesaw – Honorable Mention

Girls wrestling

Cinthia Villegas – 1st Team All-Conference, state qualifier, Academic All-State, MVP

Alexandra Jijon – 1st Team All-Conference, regional qualifier

Jaeleah Schoff – 1st Team All-Conference

Jocelyn Kiner – 1st Team All-Conference

Diana Macuixtle – 1st Team All-Conference

Gracelyn Caldwell – 1st Team All-Conference

Arimani Wakefield – 1st Team All-Conference

Shakyla Wesaw – 1st Team All-Conference

Guadelupe Brito – Honorable Mention

Liliana Velasco – Honorable Mention

Isabella Herrter – Honorable Mention

Competitive Cheer

Emma Stanger – MVP

Lauren Balsbaugh – 1st Team All-Division

Alexis Campbell – Honorable Mention

Malayna Klug – Honorable Mention

Hayden Hagemann – Four-year Varsity

Boys basketball

Isaiah Fitchett – 1st Team All-Conference, MVP

Chase Frazier – Honorable Mention

AJ Nickens – JV MVP

Girls basketball

Marlie Carpenter – Honorable Mention, MVP

Zabrina Shivers – Honorable Mention

Brenna Mott – Academic All-State

Nadia Poorman – JV MVP

CHAMPS

Continued from page B1

we had tonight. When you have the likes of four-time all-stater Jordyn Bonnema and a 20-year veteran coach that they (Comets) have in Kelly Allen and her staff and then you throw in Elli VanDussen whose already getting some Division 1 looks and sprinkle in other girls that play hard, it's going to be a tough fight. We don't ever look ahead, but we knew that at some point we'd be preparing for Kalamazoo Christian," Hood said. "Give them credit because they came into a tough environment and we fortunately were able to host it and come away with a win."

Young and fellow senior Adeline Gill finished with 12 points each to lead Brandywine, which has now defeated eight different schools that won conference championships this season. Lily Gill added eight points for the Lady Bobcats, while sophopmore guard Mackenna Price contributed six, junior Karleigh Byrd tossed in five Niyah Mason two.

"We watched film on Kalamazoo Christian's defense and noticed that they switched alot so we knew we might be able to get them a few times on back-door cuts and easy layups. They are long and athletic, but our quickness is a huge benefit for us," Young said.

"We have to keep our tenacity going on the defensive end and raise our percentages on the offensive side. If we contiue to use our quickness on defense we can overcome taller teams and that size doesn't come into play as much."

Brandywine had to rely on a superb defensive performance on a poor shooting night. The Lady Bobcats made just 17-of-62 (27.4 percent) from the floor, including just a trio of three pointers, and 8-of-19 at the free-throw line (42 percent).

"Our program is built on team defense. We like to shoot the three and get up after it. Sometimes you're going to have bad shooting nights, but if you play defense and don't worry about the name on your back and scoring points and worry just about playing team defense out on the court, you will have success. Tonight we had a bunch of girls playing for the name on the front of our jersey which says Brandywine. It was a great environment tonight," Hood said. "Again it takes five girls playing defense in our scheme. Our girls showed poise without any panic even when they came back near the end of the game."

Bonnema scored 13 points for Kalamazoo Christian and Manion added 10 for the Lady Comets, who were 11-for-46 (24 percent) from the field and 7-for-12 (58 percent) at the charity stripe.

Brandywine used its quickness and physicality to outrebound a much bigger Kalamazoo Christian squad 32-29.

Lily Gill pulled down six rebounds for Brandywine, while Adeline Gill and Byrd added five apiece. Young contributed six assists and three steals and Byrd also had three steals.

Brandywine forced Kalamazoo Christian into 17 turnovers. The Lady Bobcats coughed up the ball 10 times.

"We did a great job tonight of limiting our turnovers and spacing things out and attacking the basket at the right time," Hood said.

Brandywine jumped out to a quick 4-1 lead in a deafening and sold-out Bobcat Den. But the Comets quickly erased their deficit with a Bonnema putback and Elli VanDussen for a 5-4 advantage.

Young's triple gave Brandywine a 7-5 lead before VanDussen's deuce evened the contest up at 7-7.

From there the Bobcats reeled off the final seven points of the period and grabbed a 14-7 advantage. Lily Gill drove the baseline for a deuce, Price drained a triple and Adeline Gill scored inside to key the Bobcats' spurt.

Byrd's steal and layup and free throw moments later to open the second quarter, gave Brandywine a 17-10 advantage. Bonnema's layup brought the Comets back within five. But a Lily Gill layup and short jumper from Adeline Gill sent Brandywine into halftime with a 21-14 advantage.

The Lady Bobcats were able to build themselves a 12-point advantage after three periods thanks to a pair of Young layups, a Lily Gill layup, Adeline Gill's deuce in the post and a Price triple.

Brandywine again had it's share of bench players filling critical roles with either a basket, assist, steal, blocked shot or contributing solid performances on defense.

"Everybody has to step up, do the best you can and work hard in practice. These past couple games we've done a better job of getting off to a quicker start. Now we have to push through. We've been playing together so long that we are like a family," said senior Paige Krisher.

Fellow senior Lexi Troup echoed that statement.

"It's not about how many minutes we get but being there to support your teammates when they aren't doing well and lifting them up. We have to step up in practice and make sure our starters are well prepared for the next game," Troup said.

Hood credit a great deal of his team's preparation for Kalamazoo Christian to his good friend and coaching peer Nathan Knapp, Brandywine's head varsity boys' coach, who guided the Bobcats to a Division 3 boys title in 2024.

TANYA HAGEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

"Nathan spent all last weekend and Monday evening breaking down film on Kalamazoo Christian for us. How many schools can say they have a state championship coach at their school doing that for another program besides his own. He deserves a ton of credit for getting us ready with just one day of preparation," Hood said.

BRANDYWINE 45, KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN 32

At Niles

KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN (32): Reese Gernaat 0, Elli VanDusen 4, Jordyn Bonnema 13, Lily Manion 10, Reagan Zuiderveen 2, Carien Ybema 0, Lucia Penzotti 3. Totals 11 7-12 32.

BRANDYWINE (45): Adeline Gill 12, Karleigh Byrd 5, Adelyn Drotoz 0, Ireland Prenkert 0, Mackenna Price 6, Lily Gill 8, Miley Young 12, Niyah Mason 2. 17 8-19 45.

Kalamazoo Christian 7 14 19 32

Brandywine 14 21 32 45

3-point baskets: Kalamazoo Christian 3 (Manion 2, Bonnema 1), Brandywine 3 (Price 2, Young 1). Total fouls (fouled out): Kalamazoo Christian 18 (VanDusen), Brandywine 10. Records: Kalamazoo Christian 21-5, Brandywine 26-0

D2 REGIONAL SEMIFINAL VICKSBURG 49, EDWARDSBURG 30

The Edwardsburg girls basketball team's season came to an end Monday against Wolverine Conference foe Vicksburg in Division 2 regional semifinal play at Byron Center.

The Bulldogs beat the Eddies 49-30. Ella Zache and Shelby Laubach scored nine and seven points for the Eddies (15-10), who trailed the Bulldogs (23-2) 27-11 at halftime.

EDWARDSBURG (30): Shelby Laubach 7, Ella Zache 9, Maddie Pobuda 3, Kourtney Zarycki 5, Mya Eberlein 4, Kya Shier 2. Totals 12 4-5 30.

VICKSBURG (49): Sarlett Hosner 15, Kendra Cooley 12, Madison Cooley 6, Emily Zemitans 2, Makayla Allen 7, Hannah DeVries 7. Totals 18 8-12 49.

Edwardsburg 5 11 22 30

Vicksburg 13 27 38 49

3-point baskets: Edwardsburg 2 (Pobuda 1, Zache 1), Vicksburg 5 (K. Cooley 3, Allen 2). Total fouls: Edwardsburg 16, Vicksburg 9. Records: Edwardsburg 15-10, Vicksburg 23-2

MELVIN

Continued from page B1

He partnered up with Dowagiac's Greg Blomgren and Portage's Jason Messenger in his final game last week.

"I've been fortunate to work with some really good partners over the years. In the last few years I even got a chance to work quite a few games with my son Tanner which was really cool. I've been up and down the floor a few times," Melvin chuckled.

Just like every coach and player, the dream of each MHSAA official is to officiate a state championship at some point in their career. Melvin was fortunate to officiate three state finals, all in the smallest enrollment division, Class D.

In 1994, Melvin officiated the Class D girls state final between Portland St. Patrick and Painesdale-Jeffers at Battle Creek Kellogg Arena when girls' basketball was played in the Fall season. He also officiated the 1998 Class D girls' final between Morrice and Rapid River and the 2007 boys' finals between Cedarville and Wyoming Tri-Unity Christian.

"The first state finals game you officiate is the one you remember the most. Also being able to officiate at the Breslin Center was great too, especially since I am a lifelong Michigan State Spartans' fan," Melvin said.

Melvin considers himself blessed with some of the assignments he's had throughout his career.

"I've had alot of really good assignments and big games that involved talented teams and individuals like future NBA players Wilson Chandler and Robert Whaley, as well as Marcus Singer all from Benton Harbor.

Another memorable game which sticks out in Melvin's mind occurred during Shane Battier's high school career at Detroit Country Day. Battier went on to stardom at Duke University and later in the MBA.

TANYA HAGEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Game official Randy Melvin watches the action as he calls a game this season between New Buffalo and Three-Oaks River Valley.

"I remember it was Battier's junior year and Country Day came over to play at Mattawan and Andy (Saetre) and I were fortunate to be able to officiate that game. The gym was packed because he (Battier) was as good as everyone said he was," said Melvin, who estimates he averaged over 50 games per season and worked over 2,000 games during his career.

"During Covid I moved to Florida for two years and I didn't do any officiating until I returned to Michigan," Melvin said.

In 2022, Melvin was inducted into the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan's Hall of Honor after being nominated for the award by Niles Brandywine girls' basketball coach Josh Hood.

"I was very appreciative of Josh nominating me for such an honor. Being around the coaches and the kids and getting the chance to work with a lot of different officials are what I'll remember the most," Melvin said.

Melvin also enjoyed a long career working as an umpire in the Michigan Amateur Softball Association. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2012 as well as the National Hall of Fame in 2014.

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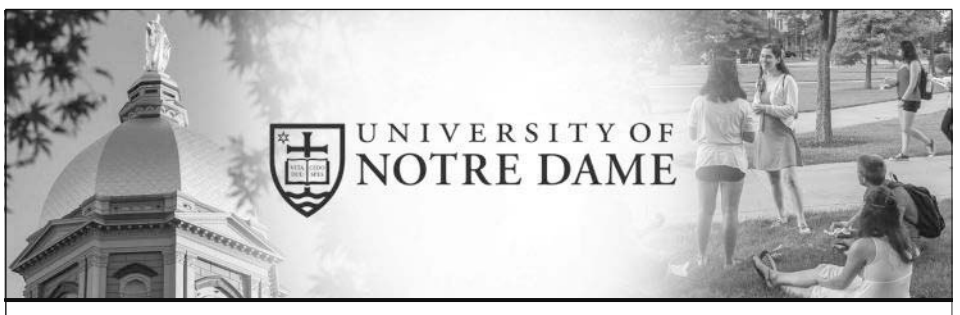

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Public Notices

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Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 15, 2025
AV/13 FORD

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF SELF STORAGE SALE

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Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 15 and 22, 2025
L2L-57041

PUBLIC NOTICE

Economy Storage, 2206 Yankee Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday March 29, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

Unit #	Name
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67	Jerome Jankowiak
95	Tera Jameson
114	Tellie Doan
116	Melissa Kaeding
148	Gloster Johnson
183	Cindy Fisher
184/66	Mary Anderson
191	Alan Smith
228/367	Shawnette Booker
240	Teyshawn Wallace
258	Briana Coon
273	Tony Pompey
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486	Leigh Anne Norris
541	Nicole Hurt
605	Michael Lewark
608	Robert Conner
624	Norman Moody
628/499	Altavious Stone
661/665	Rodney Prescott
677/567	Julie Potate

Niles U-Stor-It, 1314 E. Main Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday March 29,2025 at 10:30 a.m.

35	Tyler Cameron
49	Miranda Wendzel
57	Nathan Haynes

J & J Storage, 2220 S. 13th Street and 2627 S. 11th Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday March 29, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.

97	Blake King
99	Kim Streer
170A	Mellisa Visel
179A	Tyler Vanlaecke
189A	Erica Cutter
199A/88	Nick Gigliotti
102	Erin Linley
136	Jennifer Harrison
140	Ronnie West
168	Jerol Williams Jr.
227	Jennifer Nichols
238/466	James Diss
242	Wanda Burnett
251	Caley Alvord
262	Brittany Backus
263	Tamara Holmes
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292	The Woodshed Crafts
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319	Jeannie Barsodi
327	Robert Davis
355	Carson Bowlin
373	Rhonda Sue Outlaw
380	Leatha Lennox
420	Michelle Boyce
426	James Schilling Jr.

Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 15 and 22, 2025
STORAGE AUCTION

Legal Notices

LEGAL NOTICE

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
BERRIEN COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S ESTATE
CASE NO. AND JUDGE
2025-0091-DE-J

Court address 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085

Legal Notices

Court telephone no. 269-983-7111

Estate of JUDITH ELAINE HOESE
Date of birth: 02/23/1955
TO ALL CREDITORS:
NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Judith Elaine Hoese, died 01/11/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Kenneth Hoese, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

03/10/25

Kenneth Hoese
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Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 15, 2025
EST/HOESE, J.

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LEGAL NOTICE

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
BERRIEN COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
DECEDENT'S ESTATE
CASE NO. 2025-0052-DE

Estate of Sirimas Sirisuth Snyder
Date of birth 07/24/1948
TO ALL CREDITORS:**
Notice to creditors: The decedent, Sirimas Sirisuth Snyder, died October 25, 2023. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to James Snyder, Personal Representative, or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street, 4th Floor, St. Joseph, MI 49084 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

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Legal Notices

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Mar. 15, 2025
EST/SNYDER, S.

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STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Berrien COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate
CASE NO. and JUDGE
2025-0142-DE-J
Court address 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085
Court telephone 269-983-7111

Estate of Allen Dewayne Turnbo, deceased
Date of birth:* 07/15/1951
TO ALL CREDITORS:**
NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Allen Dewayne Turnbo, died 11/23/2024. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Tonia F. Petruska/ Karie R. Salinas, personal representative(s), or to both the probate court at 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.
03/06/2025

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Karie R. Salinas
963 Ferndale Street
Gurnee, IL 60031
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Niles Daily Star: Mar. 15, 2025
EST/TURNBO, A.

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"You can get High-Speed Internet wherever you live!"

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25 mbps download and 3 mbps upload[1]

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1 The HughesNet Gen5 service plans are designed to deliver download speeds of 25 Mbps and upload speeds of 3 Mbps, but individual customers may experience different speeds at different times of the day. Speeds and uninterrupted use are not guaranteed and may vary based on a variety of factors including: the configuration of your computer, the number of concurrent users, network or Internet congestion, the capabilities and content of the Websites you are accessing, network management practices as deemed necessary, and other factors. When you connect to the HughesNet service using Wi-Fi, your experience will vary based on your proximity to the Wi-Fi source and the strength of the signal.
2. **Free standard installation** applies to new Lease subscribers only. Not valid with Purchase option. Limited-time offer. Restrictions may apply.
3. Per the "5th, 6th, 7th and 8th FCC Measuring Broadband American Reports." Go to: https://www.hughes.com/who-we-are/resources/press-releases/
- Minimum term required. Monthly service and early termination fees apply. Visit legal.HughesNet.com for details.
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Just in!!
Fully serviced with every option
Only $5,900

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Leather, moonroof, looks, runs, and drives great
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2017 DODGE GRAND CARAVAN SXT
Just in!!
Fully serviced and ready to tote your family around
Only $9,900

2016 CHEVY SPARK LT
Showroom new with super low miles
Only $9,900

2016 KIA SOUL
Only 62,000 miles, save thousands on this low miler
Only $11,900

2018 KIA RIO HATCHBACK
Just in!!
Only 53,000 miles
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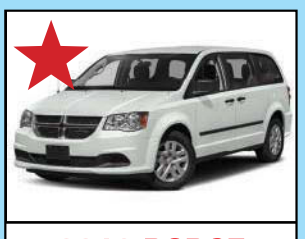
PONTIAC SOLSTICE
Low miles, great shape…Nice car to drive to car shows
Only $13,900

2015 HONDA CIVIC LX CVT
Automatic with backup camera, cruise control and amazing gas mileage!
Only $13,900



2019 DODGE GRAND CARAVAN
Get you mini-van for the mini-mum
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Fully serviced, ready to go
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Just in! Perfect delivery truck with a Tommy lift gate
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These sell fast…
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Must See!!

2022 CHRYSLER VOYAGER
Like new with full power options
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Off lease, one owner, super low miles, 7 passenger with every option
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OH BABY!!
Only $23,900

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Like new with super low miles!
Only $24,500

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Extremely rare. Only 1 of 500. Will be a collector's item
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GO ELECTRIC
Only $25,900

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BIG BLOCK, SUPER RARE
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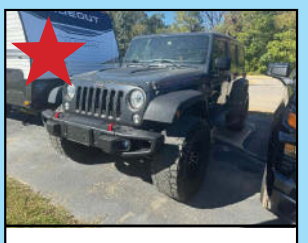
2020 LINCOLN AVIATOR AWD
Every option!! Mint condition
Only $29,900



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Lifted and gifted with every option and 37" INCH TIRES!
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Just in!! Mint condition with every option & super low miles
Only $34,900

2016 FORD F-250 XLT 4 X 4
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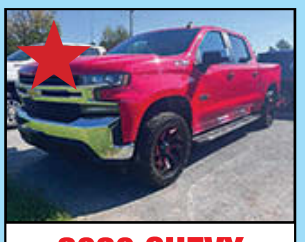

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Oh So Purdy!
Only $41,900

2022 TOYOTA TACOMA BEAST
OFF LEASE, one owner with EVERY option
Only 13,000 miles
Only $43,900

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Save thousands!
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Every option, super condition.
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